



Minutes of Volleyball England Board Meeting 26 October 2024 at SportPark and via Teams, Loughborough.

Directors Present	Titles
Adam Walker [AW]	Independent Chair
Jake Sheaf [JS] online	Elected Director
Jess Keen [JK]	Elected Director
Jess Plumridge [JP]	Elected Director
Jill Osleger [JO]	Independent Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Elected Director
Tracy Newton [TN]	Elected Director
Andres Hernandez [AH]	Independent Director
Staff Present	
Charlie Ford [CF]	Chief Executive Officer
Guin Batten [GB]	Deputy Chief Executive
In attendance	
Janet Inman [JI] online	VE Foundation

EB/24-25/27 Apologies

AW welcomed everyone to the meeting. The new Directors introduced themselves. Apologies had been received from Ali Shipway, Phil French, Brendan Fogarty, Simon Griffiths and Mark Kontopoulos.

AW clarified that JI would leave after the Board meeting.

AW added that the original plan had been to organise a facilitated session for the Board. However, because a number of Directors were not in attendance due to unforeseen circumstances, a decision had been taken to postpone the facilitated session until all Directors were available.

AW informed that AH had been appointed as the Senior Independent Director and Ali Shipway had agreed to the Vice-Chair role.

27.1 Directors Conflict of Interest & Disclosures

There were no new declarations in addition to the ones that had been already submitted.

AW thanked all Board members for completing their updated Conflict of Interest and Good Character forms.

27.2 Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved by all present.

27.3 Previous meetings

The minutes from the 21 June 2024 and 22 July 2024 meetings were taken as true and accurate records of the meetings.

- An action stemming from both meetings was publishing safeguarding outcomes.
- JP's initials were wrong in both sets, to be corrected.
- 22 July 2024 had been chaired by SG, to be corrected.

27.4 Matters arising

RH raised the following in relation to the AGM:

- Whether the issue of regional teams moving to NVL because they weren't supported locally as raised by Claudia French was being addressed. CF responded that the regional to national connectivity was being addressed.
- Nick Shaffery raised a question relating to junior development. GB confirmed that Volleyball England was working closely with Youth Sport Trust, pathways were being redesigned, junior competition framework had been restructured and player community had been redesigned. Also, the player survey was being analysed in terms of responses from young people. CF stated that the insight was indicating that youth player participation numbers would overtake senior players in the foreseeable future and there were emerging issues that would need to be addressed going forward such as safeguarding.
- RH suggested that a response to the questions be arranged. AW agreed.

EB/24-25/28 Executive Report

The Report was taken as read.

Board discussed:

- JK asked how the recruitment for the Talent Project Lead was progressing and whether there was succession planning in place for this role. CF responded that the role was being advertised. The JD was redesigned to make recruitment more inclusive. The current postholder agreed to stay in the post until a replacement is recruited.
- The Board discussed issues connected to staffing, training, job loads and recruitment at the organisation.
- TN asked about succession planning. GB commented that the People plan elaborated on the capacity and capability of the workforce with the organisational priority in reducing staff turnover at Volleyball England. Culture has been identified as a factor positively

impacting staff satisfaction and subsequently slowing staff attrition rates. Although reduced, the staff turnover might be an ongoing issue due to the size of the organisation as well as salary affordability. CF then commented that the Exec team had been ensuring that the organisational knowledge was not deposited within a singular post but rather distributed among more staff. Succession relied on principles rather than a fixed plan. CF then commented on the staff investment in the organisational mission which was also impacting decreased turnover. GB added that the recruitment for new roles had become more meaningful and targeted to ensure the right people were employed. GB asked for a Director to volunteer to have an exit interview with Kerrie, the current postholder of the Talent Project Lead post. JO volunteered. GB to organise.

- CF commented that the Hub Teams appropriately challenges the Executive team in instances where they feel stretched which was testament to a transparent and honest organisational culture.
- AH asked about Home Nations Collaboration and whether this was across all volleyball formats. CF confirmed it was.
- CF added that there had been no follow-up on the office rent review but we expect to hear more soon.
- JS updated on the Birmingham City University facility build. The contractor was still to be appointed. CF and JS would be meeting with the project manager soon to discuss this as well as to start the planning of the high-performance programme with the director of sport.
- CF asked for feedback on the Executive fortnightly updates. The Board agreed that they were very helpful.
- AW congratulated the work of the Hub Team and expressed his regret for not being able to attend the Queen and King of the Court event.
- CF thanked the staff and Board for their support over the year.

EB/24-25/29 Sub-group reports

29.1 VE Foundation

Jl highlighted:

- Four new Trustees had joined the Foundation this year.
- Jl updated on the work of Trustees and working groups and highlighted the importance of the cross-work of the Foundation and VE together.

AW thanked the Foundation for the work they had been involved in. AW commented that efforts had been made to enhance cross-collaboration.

29.2 Volleyball for life

RH reported:

- Volleyball for life report – CF already referenced pathway development, which was taking place. In addition to the report, RH took part in a presentation for the Respect programme. CF added that there had been positive response to the programme.
- AH asked when the new Beach volleyball course would be ready. RH responded that it was in development.
- JK asked about clashing of match dates (NVL vs NEVZA) and how it impacted clubs. CF responded that it was a complex issue that had no straightforward solution and needed addressing going forward.

29.3 Get Keep Grow

JP reported on:

- The number of affiliations and memberships.
- HEVO satisfaction score had increased by 2.9% since last year.
- The sub-group was back up and running and the next meeting was planned for January 2025.
- CF asked to join the group's next meeting.
- GB highlighted that the HEVO officers' recruitment had been successful.
- AW commented that the data real-time trends could be made available on the website as this could provide great storytelling around impact. Social media could be utilised to promote impact as well.
- AW asked whether there was insight around whether there were any areas of concern. JP responded that regional data was not available, only high-level data was available. The sub-group was looking at the region affiliation piece. AW commented that having regional data was important for decision making around piloting programmes and products to develop the sport.
- TN commented on the work of the sub-group and the relevance of the regional affiliation piece.
- JI added that it might be prudent to identify key individuals that could help drive work in the regions that were underrepresented. The Board commented that the volunteers were key in this, and the issue needed addressing.

29.4 Ace Service

GB updated on the work of the sub-group in Simon Griffith's absence:

- The group had been working around the 5-year plan and bringing together and onboarding the new competitions working group/ways of working. They have also been working with Gillian Harrison on the referee development pathway.
- In terms of customer satisfaction, the importance of data was reinforced again.
- The group was being proactive in moving the work forward.

29.5 Finance Strategy & Risk (FSR)

AH reported:

- Volleyball England overall remains on budget for the 2024-25 financial year.
- Our audit has been severely delayed due to a change of lead auditor. This, however, will be concluded shortly.
- The risk register was presented at the meeting with some risks highlighted including income generation, reduction in funding, cost of living increase, significant safeguarding incidences, staff turnover, members dissatisfaction, cyber-attacks.
- AH commented on the process of reviewing risk register and the frequency of updates.

Board discussed:

- Areas of member dissatisfaction.
- JK commented on the Board risk appetite and how it was impacting risk register.
- TN commented that the risk appetite and risk mitigation were missing, and they were important to be included.

EB/24-25/30 Volleyball England Safeguarding Priorities

TN as Board Safeguarding Champion led on this agenda item and highlighted the following as part of her presentation:

- The Strategy had been reviewed in terms of what was in place and what should be in place around safeguarding.
- TN had concluded that safeguarding should be a golden thread in the Strategy and stretch beyond delivering on the Code for Sports Governance requirements.
- TN had identified the areas where Safeguarding could be strengthened and those were:
 - Governance: overarching safeguarding strategy/delivery plan, aligning policies and procedures with national guidelines, reviewing reporting structure, Board's awareness, competence and capability to handle safeguarding issues,

development of relationships with stakeholders to strengthen safeguarding, data trends related to safeguarding, the use and data availability via Globacol.

- Case management group: strengthening the group in terms of competence of its members, should purpose be realigned to the strategy, frequency/contents and governance of the meetings; the role of the group in training within the organisation; awareness of the cases amongst the group.
- The membership: was the safeguarding training available to the membership, could there be a tiered approach re the training; what knowledge was already in existence among the membership that could be tapped into; enhancing the junior coaches group with safeguarding golden thread; robust safeguarding process at events.
- Culture of safeguarding should be present at all levels and areas of the sport and the organisation for everyone's benefit.

Board discussed:

- RH asked how Volleyball England could deliver the strategy through membership if the expectation was reciprocal with Volleyball England expected to deliver safeguarding framework. CF commented that the organisation had already strengthened safeguarding protocols but there were instances of contravention of those by parents during events. Parent education was a big issue to be addressed. CF then added that protocols needed tightening as a number of good practices were already in place. RH then pondered how comprehensive coach safeguarding training should be to make it more beneficial to everyone involved. CF commented that part of the issue is understanding what safeguarding meant. AH also commented that understanding of roles and responsibilities was also an issue. TN observed that Volleyball England should be clear on its message relating to safeguarding to the membership. JI added that a refresh around safeguarding was due. AW commented that understanding of liability of the organisation was critical. Also proportionality was important as well as gauging what could be achieved with the resource available. RH added that Volleyball England had a national reach, but the areas of concern and risk around safeguarding practice was at the regional level. AW added that the culture piece resonated with him and setting the message and example to the membership was important. TN responded that robustness of processes and transparency would put the organisation in good stead. AW also referenced looking after the welfare of those that looked after safeguarding. JK asked whether there was anything in place to look after the welfare of the case management group. CF responded that there was not. Also, safeguarding bodies did not offer support in this respect.
- As Safeguarding Champion, TN recommended that safeguarding outcomes are published, the Board agreed.
- A development plan will be drafted shortly for Board consideration. JK suggested that safeguarding could be discussed at the beginning of every Board meeting. RH added that this related to risk.

EB/24-25/31 Commercial & Income Diversification Plan

CF and GB presented the following:

- Commercial working group was part of this work.
- CF explained the history behind #inclusivebydesign and linked it to the wider Volleyball in England Heritage project.
- Core, casual and curious were defined as the three segmented markets for volleyball in England.
- Volleyball is a growing sport in England across all metrics.
- Fan base and player base statistics were presented.
- In terms of commercial trends in sport insight and audience are critical, membership packages needed addressing to grow data, and lastly athletes could be utilised to grow the sport.
- There were seven areas that could help Volleyball England to grow sport: VolleyStore, events, education and training, pro leagues, VE TV, membership, sponsors and partners.
- Insights and learnings showed that the direction of the sport had significantly progressed in the growth of sport and availability of opportunities going forward.

Board discussed:

- Board discussed reliance of Volleyball England on Sport England funding and the balance between this and income generation.
- Sponsorship from companies traditionally associated with manufacturing tobacco products and caffeine/alcoholic beverages and funding that could be traditionally considered unethical was discussed, as well as how this type of sponsorship played into the audiences that Volleyball England was attempting to reach and their association.
- JI asked about the commercial relationship with BVF and funding athletes. CF answered that they were not involved in those conversations.

EB/24-25/32 Volleyball in England Heritage Project

RH and CF reported the following:

- Heritage Project Group had met for the first time.
- The project aimed to tell stories and experiences of those that had been involved in the sport for many years.

- CF stated that upon commencement of his role, he had met with Barbara Totterdell who had been writing the history of volleyball in England and how this linked to the Heritage project.
- CF elaborated on the aim of the project and the four themes.

Board discussed:

- TN commented that the project had a good feel about it, and it bore importance to the sport. CF agreed and stated that he felt it was important to progress for the good of the community.
- RH commented that the group members had vast experience, and it was great to work with them.
- AW recalled the experience of a similar project he had participated in and the importance of it for the people involved.
- CF commented that the project tied with the theme of belonging in the strategy.
- JI observed that there was a big chance that the members of volleyball community were in possession of artifacts that could be beneficial for this project. GB commented that it was important to have digitalised versions of those artifacts.
- CF added that this would be a standing Board meeting agenda item.
- Peter Wardale award was for the Board to decide on. CF recommended that the Heritage working group could be made responsible for the shortlist of the candidates for the award. Board discussed diversity of the past winners. The Board agreed that the group would create a shortlist.

EB/24-25/33 Meeting finalisation

33.1 Review of Actions

Actions have been noted.

33.2 AOB

There was no other business.

33.3 Meeting Close

Actions	Who
EB/24-25/27.3 JP's initials to be corrected in both sets of June and July minutes.	CF

22 July 2024 had been chaired by SG. To be corrected.	
EB/24-25/28 GB to organise an exit interview for the Talent Project Lead postholder and JO.	GB
EB/24-25/29.5 FSR to consider risk appetite and risk mitigations as part of risk register.	FSR
EB/24-25/30 Safeguarding development plan drafted and shared with the Board at the February 2025 Board meeting.	TN
EB/24-25/32 Heritage project group to create a shortlist of Peter Wardale memorial award nominees.	Heritage project group

Al will.

Board Meeting –Report Summary

The following paper provides summary information from the 26th October 2024 board pack which should be read in conjunction with the above-board meeting minutes:

EB/24-25/28 Executive Report

1. Staff

Since the last board meeting, we can report on the below staffing updates:

- Stephen McKeown has been appointed as our National Coach Developer and will play a key role in transforming coach learning and development across all volleyball disciplines.
- We have now confirmed all of 2024/25 Student Project Officer (formerly called placement students) and have allocated their capacity as below:
 - Hannah Ring – VfL Workforce/Talent
 - Shiloh Chuang/Lauran Goh – AAS Competitions
 - Isabel Baker – Digital & Comms

All Student Project Officers have hit the ground running and are making valued contributions in line with our 2024/25 operational plans.

- The below arrangements are in place to support the organisation whilst Laura is on maternity leave:
 - Hema Choudhary has started in her Interim Strategic Manager role within the Get.Keep.Grow department.
 - Mahek Narnolia has started in her Project Lead role within the Get.Keep.Grow department and is focused on supporting the HEVO programme.
 - Safeguarding capacity, management and operations will be discussed in further detail during the meeting but key functions such as DBS processing, Globocol reporting/management etc are being supported by both me and Guin in the short term.

2. Home Nations Collaboration

The feedback from the UK Coaching Symposium was overwhelmingly positive, attendees from all active Home Nations attended as well as delegates from Ireland. Following a conversation with the Home Nations CEO's in early October, we have made a decision for England to host the Symposium every year rather than rotate this around the countries in the immediate term. The main factors affecting this decision include venue availability and accessibility.

Preparations for the 5-Nations Tournament in January continue, and a formal announcement of the event has been made.